

IMRF Round table three Background Note



These background notes have drawn inputs from Member State and stakeholder consultations, regional GCM reviews, dedicated Hub Discussion Spaces, IMRF Dialogues series, information available in the Migration Network Hub Repository of Practices, and the Secretary-General's 2022 report. Further references are on the Network's [website](#).



1. INTRODUCTION

The third of the round tables of the International Migration Review Forum (IMRF) will offer space for discussion of progress made in the implementation of objectives 14, 15, 16, 19, 20, and 22 of the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration (GCM). This note will take into account that the GCM is based on a set of ten cross-cutting and interdependent guiding principles.

Round table three seeks to discuss practical and action-oriented approaches to: enhancing consular protection, assistance and cooperation; providing access to basic services; empowering migrants and societies to realize full inclusion and social cohesion; creating conditions for migrants and diasporas to fully contribute to sustainable development; transferring remittances and fostering financial inclusion of migrants; and establishing mechanisms for the portability of social security entitlements and earned benefits.

The combined public health, economic, social, and protection crises caused by the COVID-19 pandemic have exacerbated inequalities and threats to migrants' lives. They have also heightened the barriers to effective migrant inclusion in communities, through lack of or inadequate access to public health services, protection and support, opportunities for decent work, as well as heightened exposure to stigmatization and xenophobia. This has demonstrated the extent to which universal access to services is vital to protect livelihoods and guarantee the safety of all. The pandemic highlighted the important role migrants often play, both as essential workers and

service providers in countries of transit and destination, and as senders of remittances and assistance to countries of origin, and through this, to advancing sustainable development for the benefit of all.

2. OVERVIEW OF PROGRESS

Objective 14: Enhance consular protection, assistance and cooperation throughout the migration cycle



Consular assistance plays an essential role in establishing proof of legal identity, addressing vulnerabilities of migrants, providing timely and accurate information to migrants, strengthening procedures and enhancing predictability, supporting diaspora engagement in development, and facilitating return and reintegration.

The pandemic tested the capacities of consular networks to assist migrants throughout the migration process. Successful examples include the use of digital tools for enhancing access to services, and expanding their use through advocacy, mediation and legal assistance. Argentina, for example, strengthened consular support through its one-stop virtual mechanism, and collaborated with diaspora to provide food and housing. In Guarulhos, Brazil,

"mobile consulates" were set up to enhance outreach and assistance to migrants at the local level. As an example of regional cooperation, consular assistance was improved through the Guidelines on Consular Assistance by ASEAN Member States Missions in Third Countries to Nationals of Other ASEAN Member States¹, as well as the ASEAN travel corridor arrangements framework². Both facilitate human mobility while considering COVID-19 measures.

Since the adoption of the GCM, although many improvements have been made, gaps still exist. These include remote assistance for migrants with lessened access to consular assistance during emergency situations; effective communication of accurate and timely consular information to migrants; and challenges posed by the impact of the digital divide on migrants.

Objective 15: Provide access to basic services for all migrants



Migrants play a key role in providing basic services. However, they often face legal and practical barriers to accessing basic services related to health, education, social protection, child protection, and decent work, particularly if they are in an irregular situation. These barriers include restricted legal entitlements such as the requirement of formal papers to receive basic healthcare; language barriers; lack of culturally appropriate

services; discrimination; and fear of detention or deportation when gaining access to services. This in turn, can hamper their ability to contribute to their host and origin communities.

The digitalization of basic services because of social distancing measures during the COVID-19 pandemic contributed to expanding access. However, it also creates new risks of exclusion for disadvantaged

¹ <https://asean.org/declaration-on-the-guidelines-on-consular-assistance-by-asean-member-states-missions-in-third-countries-to-nationals-of-other-asean-member-states/>

² <https://asean.org/asean-declaration-on-an-asean-travel-corridor-arrangement-framework/>

migrant populations. COVID-19 has demonstrated that equal and affordable access to services, in particular affordable access to healthcare and vaccines, unemployment benefits and social protection without risk of deportation or detention - especially at the local level - are essential for effective crisis response and resilience. Ireland implemented measures to enable undocumented migrants to

access services and justice during the pandemic without fear of immigration enforcement. Saudi Arabia, South Sudan and Zimbabwe, as well as some local authorities, published brochures and developed radio programmes in a variety of languages to keep migrant populations regularly updated on COVID-19 measures.

Objective 16: Empower migrants and societies to realize full inclusion and social cohesion



16 INCLUSION AND SOCIAL COHESION

Growing inequalities and discrimination continue to negatively impact migrants' inclusion and social cohesion in countries of transit and destination. Despite increasing global dialogue around inclusivity, equity and equality, groups such as women, children, persons with disabilities, youth and LGBTQI+ migrants still face discrimination. This is exacerbated when vulnerabilities intersect. The COVID-19 pandemic highlighted that to be inclusive, the implementation of protection, justice, and emergency responses must be sensitive and responsive to the multiple and intersecting challenges faced by all segments of society, including migrants. Migrant inclusion is essential to both recovery from the pandemic and local and national development more broadly.

Many stakeholders called for existing social, economic, and political systems, policies and practices to be assessed for inequalities in access to services, opportunities, and socio-economic outcomes. They argue that migrants should be given an equal voice in decision-making at all levels of government, including local and grassroots levels.

Promising practices include Germany's promotion of language learning, professional training, employment, education, and social inclusion measures, based on the principle of equal opportunity, which applies to all eligible persons, regardless of national, ethnic or religious background, and migratory status. Spain elevated awareness on inclusive societies by developing a "National Observatory for Countering Xenophobia and Racism". In El Salvador and Peru, cooperation with local actors through community awareness campaigns supported the enhancement of social cohesion within diverse communities.

The COVID-19 pandemic has demonstrated that inclusive policies and social cohesion are vital for the well-being of migrants, and that the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development will not be achieved if migrants are left behind. Joint roadmaps, mobilizing whole of government and whole of society approaches set out in the GCM, are needed to reduce inequalities and empower migrants as development actors.

Objective 19: Create conditions for migrants and diasporas to fully contribute to sustainable development in all countries



19 MIGRANT AND DIASPORA CONTRIBUTIONS

The COVID-19 pandemic has undone much progress in creating conditions for migrants and diaspora to fully contribute to sustainable development. Stakeholders have strengthened narratives on migration as a sustainable

development lever, extending beyond financial contributions to the transfer of skills and knowledge, social and civic engagement, and the importance of cultural exchange. Despite the limited mobility and restrictive measures resulting from responses to the COVID-19 pandemic, diaspora communities showed

innovative responses, including humanitarian initiatives, digital platforms, health and psychological assistance. They also provided administrative support to assist with the return of those who had been most impacted from the pandemic.

Many actors also worked to recognize the key role diaspora can play, assisting diaspora organizations to engage and collaborate more effectively and efficiently through initiatives such as the European Union Global Diaspora Facility (EUDiF) with its Capacity Development Lab³. Togo reported that the

mobilization of the Togolese diaspora has intensified in recent years through innovative initiatives such as "Réussite diaspora".

Overall, engaged diaspora networks benefitted their host communities. - Further, through increasing remittance flows, transmitting skills and technology, as well as demonstrating the potential development advantages of return to origin communities, diaspora contributions can lead to brain gain or circulation rather than brain drain.

Objective 20: Promote faster, safer, and cheaper transfer of remittances and foster financial inclusion of migrants



During the last two years the flow of remittances has only slightly decreased. Migrants continue to send money home despite the significant challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic. At the same time, the pandemic made apparent the barriers that prevent migrants from providing support to their families and communities in countries of origin.

Many remittance-receiving households suffer from lack of proper financial inclusion and financial safety nets. Often remittance-receiving households are excluded from national social protection programmes based on the assumption that these households are receiving remittances from abroad.

To address these challenges, actions to ensure uninterrupted remittance flows have been made by

several states and stakeholders. These include considering remittance services to be essential services in times of crisis and promoting the use of digital tools for channeling remittance flows across borders. The Republic of Moldova recognized the importance of diaspora engagement and remittance contributions within its national development strategy. The Gambia and Kenya included remittances in their national financial inclusion strategies.

Many people rely on seasonal migration to adapt to the adverse impacts of climate change on their livelihoods, and search for alternative solutions for their families. In this case, remittances can represent a crucial aspect of adaptation strategies – both for those migrating and those left behind.

Objective 22: Establish mechanisms for the portability of social security entitlements and earned benefits



Several countries have advanced implementation of bilateral or multilateral agreements to foster portability of social security

entitlements, in line with international human rights norms and labour standards. Yet their coverage is not universal, and gaps in their implementation leave migrant workers disproportionately uncovered by

³ The EUDiF Capacity Development Lab - <https://diasporaforddevelopment.eu/capacity-development/>

social protection systems, indicating a need to improve coordination and communication.

Portugal has concluded bilateral social security agreements with 20 countries and is bound by two multilateral social security agreements: with Iberic American countries and with the community of Portuguese speaking countries. Another example comes from the Philippines: since the adoption of the

GCM, the Philippines has entered into bilateral social security agreements with 15 states. Subregional cooperation such as the Siem Reap Roadmap toward the Labour Ministerial Declaration on the Portability of Social Security for Migrant Workers in Cambodia-Lao People's Democratic Republic-Myanmar-Thailand-Viet Nam (CLMTV) can help drive coordinated action towards this objective.

3. GUIDING QUESTIONS



Objective 14

- What good practices can be implemented to enhance the capacity of consular authorities to provide assistance to migrants, including in facilitating access to legal identity, and proof of nationality for all?



Objective 15

- What good practices exist to enhance regularization pathways to allow migrant communities to contribute to and benefit from social protection systems?
- What key supporting mechanisms have Member States, local governments and other stakeholders put in place to ensure cooperation between service providers and immigration authorities does not exacerbate the situation of vulnerability of irregular migrants by compromising their safe access to basic services?
- What actions have Member States and other stakeholders implemented to incorporate the health needs of migrants into national and local health-care policies and plans?
- What challenges have Member States, local governments and stakeholders faced in ensuring access to education for migrant children, including undocumented children?



Objective 16

- What practices have Member States and other stakeholders implemented to support, encourage and empower migrants' participation into decision-making that impacts on migrant inclusion?
- What accountability mechanisms are in place to allow local actors to monitor intersectoral actions for the realization of socially cohesive communities?
- What measures have been put in place to provide the required public resources and infrastructures, data availability and protection and to enhance the capacity to tackle discriminatory discourses and behaviours?



Objective 19

- What programmes, policies and mechanisms exist to facilitate migrant and diaspora contributions to sustainable development?
- Have partnerships been established between local authorities, local communities, the private sector, and diasporas to promote knowledge and skills transfer between countries of origin and destination?



Objective 20

- What innovative new models are there to make remittances and migrant savings part of Integrated National Financial Frameworks for development?
- How are Member States and other stakeholders contributing to promote faster, safer, and cheaper remittances and to improving their capacity to foster development and improve the well-being of migrants, their families and communities in countries of origin and destination?



Objective 22

- How can cross-border cooperation on portability of social protection be strengthened?
- What has been done to extend social protection to migrant workers through social security agreements, bilateral labour migration agreements or national social protection floors?
- What are the remaining gaps?